



EBT WIRELESS PROJECT December 08 Newsletter



DHS

From the Editor – Jan Walters

Total Transactions	EBT Transactions	Total Sales on Wireless
January 08 345	18 (5.2% of total)	\$14,753
February 358	14 (3.9% of total)	\$15,376
March 423	15 (3.5% of total)	\$22,346
April 433	13 (3% of total)	\$30,646
May 2542	190 (7.5% of total)	\$101,772
June 3020	435 (14.4% of total)	\$78,630
July 3612	807 (22.3% of total)	\$52,041
Aug 4363	1083 (25% of total)	\$67,664
Sept 4650	924 (20% of total)	\$96,733
October 5224	668 (12.8% of total)	\$131,884
November 1306	58 (4.4% of total)	\$53,317

Sales continue to outpace last year's numbers. In November 08 total sales were \$53,317 compared to \$40,237 for the same period last year. This is an increase of 33%. EBT sales were 6% higher in November 08 compared to November 07, but the number of EBT transactions for November 08 were 26% higher than the same period last year.

Year-to-date total sales, including EBT, are \$666,397 for 2008 compared to \$472,349 for 2007, which is a 41% increase.

Tracy and Jan have moved offices. Our phone numbers are the same but we now work on the 5th Floor of the Hoover Building. Our new fax number is 515-281-7791.

Farmers with Highest EBT Transactions

DHS recently submitted the reimbursement list to Merchant Source for the reimbursement of the \$.07 retailer fee. DHS reimburses you \$.07 for every EBT approved transaction on a retroactive basis. The current period is from May – October 2008. You will receive the reimbursement in December.

For this six-month period, there were 3494 EBT transactions from 114 producers/farmers. That is an average of 31 transactions per retailer/farmer. Nine farmers had more than 100 EBT transactions for this period of time. They were:

Country Market	280 EBT transactions
Scavo Market	167 EBT transactions
Story Book Orchard	153 EBT transactions
Hoffman Produce	135 EBT transactions
Rinehart Family Farms	131 EBT transactions
Nostalgia Farms	131 EBT transactions

DeMoss Pumpkin Farm	114 EBT transactions
VenHorst Enterprises	104 EBT transactions
Barb's Garden & Pantry	102 EBT transactions

Meet The Farmer – Tammy Donovan – Country Market (Sioux City)

We called and did a telephone interview on December 12th with Tammy Donovan – Country Market.

Q: Why did you want to apply for the program and become a Food Stamp retailer?

R: She wanted to help boost sales and wanted the convenience for her customers.

Q: Do you think your customers are purchasing more since you can accept EBT, debit and credit cards?

R: This was one of the better years for Country Market. She estimates that their sales were up 15 to 20%. EBT customers show the most appreciation for the Wireless Project.

Q: From your perspective, what are the benefits of the Wireless Project?

R: Convenience, more professional, and keeps up with technology. She always takes her wireless machine to her stand and always has her signs up and visible. She feels that this is very important so that her customers can depend on her.

The Country Market stand is located on 14th and Hamilton Streets in Sioux City. They sell sweet corn, melons, tomatoes, onions, peppers, squash, peaches, jams, honey and apples. The Donovan's have been growing vegetables for the last 23 years. The reason Randy and Tammy began growing vegetables many years ago was to know what their three kids (Ashley (23), Alex (20), and April (17)) were doing. To be able to sell at the Country Market, you first have to work out in the fields. Friends and family that work in their stand get paid on their attitude and how well they treat the customers. This is a BIG policy at the Country Market and it was also used on their 3 kids.



Country Market

Upcoming Events

Iowa Fruit & Vegetable Growers & Marketers Conference - will be held January 29-31, 2009 at the Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines, IA. Check out their website for additional information. www.iafruitvegetablegrowers.org

Change – Tentative DHS Fourth Annual Farmers' Market Meeting – This conference is intended for farmers and market managers participating in the EBT Wireless Project. We will be working on the agenda. Our goal will be to review the results from 2008; total sales, EBT sales results, trend information, etc. Some of the topics we are considering as agenda items are marketing tips on how to maximize the wireless equipment, etc. We plan on inviting someone from ISU/Value Added Agriculture to present also. If you have any suggestions on topics that you want to hear about, please let us know right away.

The meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 2, 2009. As you've read the newspaper lately or listened to the radio, you know that state government is reducing budget expenditures due to the current economy and loss of revenue. **DHS will not be able to reimburse you for mileage this year nor pay for lunch.** We feel the conference is important and provides a great venue to meet and learn from one another.

We need help determining whether the conference is valuable to you. We would like to get an estimate on the number of people who would attend a meeting on March 2nd if we held it. If there is enough interest, we could do a potluck or try to find a location that would allow us to bring in lunch and everyone would pay for their own meal. Please contact Tracy or Jan by December 31st for a count, as we will need to locate space for the meeting.

IFBF Annual Conference & Tradeshow – Dec. 3rd & 4th

Iowa Farm Bureau held their annual conference and tradeshow on Dec 3rd and 4th. DHS staff attended as well as three of the farmers using the wireless equipment. Even though snow and ice covered the roads on Wednesday morning, Dec. 3rd, by afternoon the tradeshow had a lot of activity. DHS handed out information on the Food Assistance program and talked to farmers who were interested in participating in the wireless project in 2009. The three farmers attending the tradeshow had a wide variety of goods to sell including; cinnamon rolls, salsa, cookies, herbs, tea, seasonings to mix with butter, granola, and a large variety of jams and jellies. Each time we attend a conference with you, we are impressed by the high quality of your products and the professional looking stands and arrangements that you bring with you. The farmers who attended the tradeshow this year were: Dick and Letha DeMoss (Ames), Ann Bushman (Ft. Atkinson) and Steve & Barb Pethoud (Long Grove).



Dick & Letha DeMoss



Ann Bushman



Steve Pethoud & Customer

Important Information on Turning Off Your Machine!

When you decide to turn off your wireless machines for the winter or for good it is extremely important that you contact Tracy first, not Total Merchant Services (TMS). The EBT Wireless Program is a special program and therefore the closure forms HAVE to come through us. If you contact TMS directly, you may incur the \$295 early termination fee. We have had two farmers go directly to TMS and one of the farmers even sent the State of Iowa owned equipment back to TMS and it cannot be retrieved. The same farmer also threw away our signs. Because of these actions, the farmer has been billed for the loss State of Iowa equipment. If you have any questions on this issue, please contact Tracy.

Reminders:

1. Since we have so many new farmers, remember that you cannot ring up a sale for another vendor. You could lose your Food Stamp certification and be terminated from the Wireless Project.

2. Since you are paying for the commercial transaction fees, be sure to keep track of what you are paying so you can use those expenses as a tax deduction.
3. You cannot set a minimum purchase amount. If an EBT household wishes to purchase \$.50 in onions, you do need to process the transaction. Same for any debit or credit transaction.
4. If your machine quits working, be sure to call Jan or Tracy right away! Or if it during the weekend, you can call the 800 phone number on the side of your machine.
5. Let us know if you need any supplies such as paper rolls or battery.
6. The second battery that we provide to you was purchased by DHS. If you ever need to return your wireless machine, be sure to keep one battery, carrying case and signs. We will pick them up from you.
7. **Charge your batteries before market.** You should always have a charged battery, ready to go for market. If a battery is not holding a charge, contact Tracy for a replacement.
10. Please make sure to keep the original box that your machine came in as it contains the Sim card, which is needed to identify your machine if you have to call TMS.

Help Desk

We are here to help you!

When you have questions about:

- **Participating in the Wireless project or reimbursement questions? Call Tracy Penick at 515-281-5545 or Jan Walters at 515-281-3588.**
- **What you can sell to EBT customers, or being authorized to accept EBT? Call FNS at 515-284-4035.**
- **Food Assistance eligibility? Call Char Hansen at 515-281-6820.**